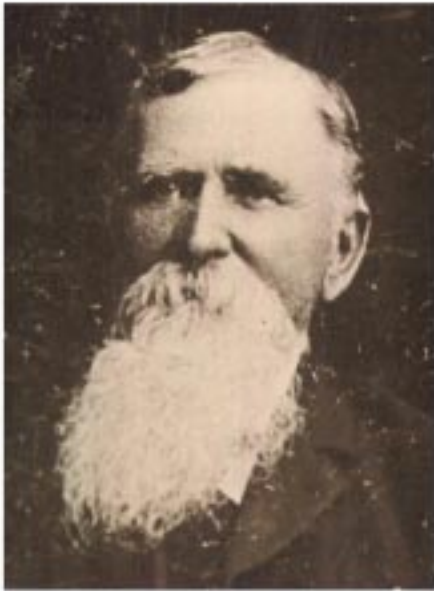


## The Niels Hansen Family

by Mike and Anna St. Clair



**Niels Hansen 1832-1902**

On Wednesday, March 16, 1887, Niels Hansen visited his friend and associate, Charles Ora Card at the Card home in Logan, Utah. At about 12:30 p.m., a buggy was heard to pass by the house. Card quietly parted the curtains and determined the buggy belonged to one of the marshals looking for offending polygamists. Niels was immediately sent to warn fellow church members of the marshal's presence in their midst.<sup>1</sup> This time the men were safe from arrest, but this would not always be so. To avoid such dangers, Niels relocated to Alberta, Canada, leaving behind all but one of his wives and the nation he had crossed the Atlantic to embrace. Knowing of the law abiding Danish family in which Niels was raised, it would have been impossible to foresee him ever being on the "wrong side of the law." But it did happen; and in the process, Niels championed the cause of righteousness while making *two* new nations his own during his lifetime.

The history of the Niels Hansen family is inextricably bound to historical issues pertinent to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the second half of the nineteenth century. Niels qualifies as a pioneer in every aspect of his life. Along with his parents and his brothers, he was among the earliest converts to the Mormon Church in Denmark. Eventually Niels, all his brothers and their families, and his parents crossed the Atlantic Ocean. They followed the Mormon Trail to the Salt Lake Valley suffering all the well-publicized hardships of that journey,

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<sup>1</sup>Donald G. Godfrey and Brigham Y. Card, eds. *The Diaries of Charles Ora Card—The Canadian Years: 1886-1903* (University of Utah Press: Salt Lake City, 1993), 38.

including the loss of several family members to cholera and other illnesses. More than once they pulled up roots and resettled, even after reaching Salt Lake City. After a short stay in Salt Lake, Niels settled first in Brigham City, then in the Logan area, and finally emigrated to southern Alberta, Canada.

Niels, his brother Jens, and his father-in-law, Rudolph Hochstrasser, served missions for the Church. As a new convert and a very young man, Niels served a mission in Norway during which he was imprisoned for seven months. After his release he served as a “home” missionary in various parts of Denmark and en route to Salt Lake he served a short mission to Clay county, Missouri. Late in life he served another mission in Manitoba, Canada as one of the first group of missionaries to ever visit that area. Niels’s families, the families of his brother, Jens, and the families of Rudolph Hochstrasser were involved in the trials suffered by polygamists including arrest, trial, fines, imprisonment, and separation from loved ones. Of the brothers, only Niels immigrated to Canada. One of the children born in the small town of Aetna, Alberta, to Niels and his sixth wife, Eva Leota Hochstrasser, was Mike’s grandmother, Mary Leota Hansen.

Although there were a multitude of trials and sorrows, there is not even a trace of complaint or the tiniest attitude of rebellion in the writings and records that remain. Rather obedience, dedication, service, and joy in the Lord speak throughout. With acts of faithfulness continuing to the end of their mortal lives, they purchased the greatest gift of all, eternal life and a hope in Christ for themselves and those who followed after.

Niels was the son of Hans Jorgensen and Hans’s first wife, Maren Kirstine (Munch) Pedersen. He had sixteen siblings; about half were born to his mother and half to his father’s second wife, Dorthea Christensen. The oldest, Jorgen Jacobsen, was born to his mother prior to

his parents marriage. His father was married to two women, although not as a polygamist. Hans fathered fifteen children, seven with his first wife, Maren, and eight with Dorthea Christensen. A child born to Maren before their marriage was also treated as one of the family. Niels married six times having children with two of his wives. Although Niels and his families will be the main focus of this paper, a part will relate events of the birth family of Niels's sixth wife, Eva Leota Hochstrasser. Niels did not leave any journals or diaries. What we know of him has been pieced together from a multitude of sources. They tell a remarkable story.

### **Life in Denmark**

There were nearly 50,000 converts in Scandinavia between 1850 and 1900.<sup>2</sup> Starting in the 1840s, emigrant guides inviting emigration to America began to be published. By the time the first missionaries came to Denmark in 1850, the Danish imagination had been alerted to the Mormons and Zion by appealing imagery publicized in persuasive tracts. "A Voice of Truth" alone had a first edition of 2,000 copies; and by 1882 there were 140,000 such tracts in circulation.<sup>3</sup> Responding to the vigorous literature recounting the discovery of the Book of Mormon, a young man by the name of Peter O. Hansen was the first to come to the United States from Denmark in search of religious truth in the Mormon religion. This was the beginning for 25,000 of his countrymen who would immigrate to the United States before 1900. One of these emigrants was Niels Hansen.

Niels was born at Trostrup Korup, in the northeastern part of the island of Fyen, Denmark, on August 11, 1832. His birth family was probably Lutheran as the State Church of

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<sup>2</sup>William Mulder. Image of Zion: Mormonism as and American Influence in Scandinavia, *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, vol. 43, no. 1 (June 1956), 19.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, 23.

Denmark was the Lutheran Church. Also in substantiation of this is the journal of Jens, Niels's brother, which records that Jens was confirmed into the Lutheran Church at age 14.<sup>4</sup> But it is probable the family did not actively attend the church. From a letter to the First Presidency of the Mormon Church in 1851, Elder Erastus Snow remarks, "Churchgoing is in late years getting much out of fashion except for extraordinary occasions. It is no uncommon thing in their popular churches, to see only eight or ten persons, but the priest is paid and required by law to perform services if there are two present."<sup>5</sup> The people would select Sunday as the day to sponsor balls and to indulge in other amusements such as attendance at the theater. Nevertheless, good moral principles were taught in Niels's home, as in most Danish homes, laying the groundwork for the eventual introduction of the gospel there.

Niels's family lived in the village of Otterup, Odense County during the years of his youth. From Elder Snow's correspondence, much can be deduced about life in this small village. Most of the Danish country folk lived in small villages such as Otterup. Their homes were small with thatched roofs and floors made of clay. Even the smallest and most humble of the villages had a church and priest. The priest's duties were to aid the villagers in spiritual matters including receiving their tithes.<sup>6</sup>



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<sup>4</sup>Jens Hansen. *Jens Hansen's Life Story* (not published, available at BYU Library Americana Collection under Jorgensen family records donated by Rebecca Jorgensen Frost), 1.

<sup>5</sup>Erastus Snow. *One Year in Scandinavia* (F. D. Richards: Liverpool, 1851), 19.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*

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|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
|                         | Jorgen Jacobsen (Half brother) |
|                         | Jens Hansen                    |
|                         | Lars Hansen (Twin)             |
| Hans Jorgensen          | Ane Marie Hansen (Twin)        |
| Maren Kirstine Pedersen | Jorgen Peter Hansen            |
|                         | Peder Hansen                   |
|                         | Niels Hansen                   |
|                         | Hans Hansen                    |

At the time of Niels's birth, the family consisted of Jorgen Jacobsen, born to Hans's first wife in 1815 before their marriage, Jens born in 1823, Jorgen Peter born in 1827, Peder born in 1829, and Niels born in 1832. Hans Jr. was born in 1835. Niels's only sister had been a twin, Ane Marie, who

died the day of her birth. The other twin, a son named Lars, died one day later. For many years the family had been very poor. The children sold cow skins, and pottery. Eventually Niels's father became a slaughterer of cattle and things began to be better.<sup>7</sup> From these humble beginnings arose a mighty family.

When seven years of age, Niels was stricken with scrofula.<sup>8</sup> This disease, much like tuberculosis, clung to him for eight years and significantly interfered with his schooling. He did finally recover. We know that for everyday activities in the village, wooden clogs were worn and for Sunday, leather clogs. But for dancing, the villagers wore regular shoes! Most of the clothing was homemade. The women would take wool from the sheep, weave the cloth and make it into clothes. The newest and best clothes were saved for the Sabbath. The Danish may not have always attended Sunday services, but religion in the form of Lutheranism was the basis

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<sup>7</sup>Jens Hansen, *Life Story*, 1.

<sup>8</sup>Scrofula used to be a very common form of tuberculosis. It consisted of enlarged rubbery lymph nodes in the neck, which were not painful, and often drained onto the skin of the neck through small holes called sinus tracts. Before antibiotics offered a reliable way to treat tuberculosis it could be a very chronic infection, lasting for years. It was often caused by the organism, *M. Bovis*, which was common in cows, infected their udders, was passed into milk, and infected people who drank it. The entry of infection was somewhere in the mouth, and lymph nodes in the neck would then be involved. Tuberculosis in cattle herds has been effectively wiped out in the industrial world, so this form of scrofula has become a rarity. Infection of the lymph nodes of the neck is still sometimes seen though, but now caused by *M. Tuberculosis*, the bacteria that causes regular tuberculosis, and it gets to the lymph nodes from the lungs, which are almost always the first site of tuberculosis infection.  
<http://www.thriveonline.com/health/bill.05-12-97.html>.

for life in Denmark. The biblical method of resting on the seventh day and also the seventh year was incorporated into many aspects of life including agriculture. Crops would be rotated in such a way that the sixth year the land was used for pasture and the seventh it would be plowed to rest. Families usually had two books, the New Testament and the Old Testament.

Schooling was sporadic. Geography and history dealt mostly with European countries, and students were instructed very little about America. The teachers were paid by the government and hired for life. The students did not go every day; the higher grades went on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Students were promoted according to ability. Graduation occurred at the age of 14. The graduation exercises were held in the church. James Peter Christensen, a first cousin of Niels, once removed, wrote, “The graduates were lined up along the front. The minister would go along and ask questions and we would have to answer them before the congregation. Anyone failing to answer these questions correctly would have to go back for another six months. In the Lutheran Church of which my parents and family were members, the first Sunday after graduation the graduates had to meet in church and partake of



**Jens Hansen 1823-1897**

the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, which consisted of tablets and wine. We would sit in a half circle before the alter on this Sunday.”<sup>9</sup> Graduation marked the last of the religious training offered to the youth.

Jens, Niels’s older brother, was the first to embrace the gospel and was responsible for bringing it to Niels and the other family members. Niels was much influenced by Jens; this was fortunate as

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<sup>9</sup>James Peter Christensen. The Life History of James Peter Christensen. (Unpublished) On Internet at [http://www.lofthouse.com/USA/Utah/boxelder/pioneers/CHRIS\\_JP.HTM](http://www.lofthouse.com/USA/Utah/boxelder/pioneers/CHRIS_JP.HTM) (16 June 1999), 1-4.

Jens was naturally a good and spiritual man, a brother of whom Niels could be proud. We owe Jens much of our knowledge of the conversions of Niels's family to the Church. Jens own conversion was recorded in one of his journals; it reveals much about the man Niels looked up to as his older brother. Previous to his conversion experience, Jens had received a knee injury in the war with Germany. It caused him much pain and trouble. In March of 1851 while working in Copenhagen, Jens heard about the Mormons from Elder Christensen. This Elder visited Jens in his temporary home. During their conversation, Elder Christensen reached out his hand in an inadvertent gesture that happened to touch Jens's injured knee; Elder Christensen did not know of Jens's injury. Jens writes, "and I thought to myself, 'if he is a servant of the Lord as in olden days, then healing power will work on me because he has touched me.' I therefore took the bandage off my knee and, from then on, my knee became strong again. The 25<sup>th</sup> of August I received the gospel of Jesus Christ."<sup>10</sup>

For Niels, the conversion of his parents must have been a powerful experience considering the changes required of them in order to make this commitment. During a mission Jens filled in Denmark, he took a little time out to return home and visit his parents. While there, he held some meetings at home in the attempt to present the gospel to his parents. Jens wrote:

My father wanted to learn something about it in such a way that he went outside and asked the Lord to let him know about the teachings. When he came back inside, he felt unworthy to be in the same room where I was. I met him and he ask me to baptize him, which I did on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December, 1851. This same time my mother was baptized also.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Jens Hansen, *Life Story*, 6.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, 8.

From several other accounts we learn more of this conversion. In *Centennial History of Scandinavian Missions* we read that Hans had received a dream many months previous where he was told that his son Jens would be a savior to his family.<sup>12</sup>

For young Niels, watching his father overcome the obstacles his lifestyle for many years presented in order to be baptized must have been amazing. We know Hans used tobacco, tea, and coffee; his toddy jug was always on the table, between meals and at meals. One of Hans's daughters, Rebecca, wrote:

So when the principles and commandments of the new church were explained to him, it took some time before he accepted them for he knew he had much to overcome. But day by day he studied the scriptures, deliberated, then accepted it literally. 'For,' he said, 'If it is worth anything, it is worth everything.'<sup>13</sup>

Niels's father had truly begun a new life. He never reverted to his early habits. Niels saw the power of a gospel that could so drastically change his father. He, too, was baptized shortly after the conversion of his parents took place.

### **Mission to Norway**

Because of his long battle with scrofula, Niels was not able to sustain hard labor. He became a tailor and was practicing this profession in December of 1851 when he was converted and baptized. Jens left to serve the remainder of his mission, and Niels was further instructed by Jens's previous missionary companion, William O. Anderson. In 1852 Niels was ordained a Teacher. Later that year he traveled to Copenhagen to work with one of his brothers. It was from here that he was called on a mission to Norway.

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<sup>12</sup>Albert L. Zobell, Jr. *Under the Midnight Sun: Centennial History of Scandinavian Missions* (Deseret Book: Salt Lake City, 1950), 38.

<sup>13</sup>Rebecca Jorgensen Frost. *History of Hans Jorgensen and His Wife, Dorthea Andersen Jorgensen* (not published - Copy in BYU Library Americana Collection), 1.



At this time in the early 1850s, governmental leaders in Norway were very concerned about the Mormon missionaries. They were deeply committed to preserving Norwegian traditions. Some of them were also power hungry.<sup>14</sup> Toward the end of 1852, the decision was made in Oslo to imprison Mormon missionaries. From the *History of the Scandinavian Mission* we learn of Niels's approach to Norway. While still in the boat perhaps two or three miles offshore from Brevig, Niels and the other missionaries were very surprised to see two missionaries rowing out to meet them. Elder John A. Ahmanson and Priest Jeppe J. Folkmann were approaching in a small boat. The two missionaries had been liberated from the jail after being under arrest for four days. They told Niels that the entire town of Brevig was in a hostile, armed state. The mob had vowed to kill the "Mormon Priest." Somehow the news of the additional missionaries planning to enter Norway had reached the ears of the townspeople. Niels is quoted "Upon hearing the intelligence, we all felt to give thanks to God, our Heavenly Father, for it was now clear to our understanding that the Lord knew the plans of our enemies and had frustrated them by keeping us out of their power."<sup>15</sup>

Niels was not able to evade his enemies long. Soon he was stopped by the authorities. He vigorously protested and defended his rights in such a convincing manner that he was allowed to stay for a time in Norway. Still, trouble lay ahead. On Oct 14, 1852, the Governor of Smaalenenes County, Birch Reichenwaldt, stopped four missionaries, including Niels. Several accounts have been written of this confrontation providing extensive information. One

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<sup>14</sup>Gerald Myron Haslam. *Clash of Cultures: the Norwegian experience with Mormonism: 1842-1920* (P. Lang: New York, 1984), 40.

<sup>15</sup>Andrew Jensen. *History of the Scandinavian Mission* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1927), 61.

of the missionaries, Christian J. Larsen, recorded that the missionaries were addressed in a very brutal manner, and the attempt was made to return them to Fredriksstad to be imprisoned. Since they had not broken any law, Elder Larsen bid Birch goodbye and the missionaries continued their journey. Svend Larsen wrote that the missionaries were actually arrested. He says that because he did not personally know Birch, he asked for proof of his identity and authority to arrest the missionaries. Reichenwaldt went into a rage; after showing the missionaries his badge, he ordered them to return with him. They would not.<sup>16</sup> Upon reaching their destination, Ingolsrud, they were finally arrested by Sheriff Ytter's son who came for them with a group of farmers. Niels was imprisoned in the city of Elverhoei for seven months.<sup>17</sup>

After release, Niels was called to preside over the Tröstrup Korup Branch. He served in this call for a year and was then sent to take charge of the Hvissel and Grep Branches in Jutland. In the fall of 1855, Niels was released and soon after sailed for America. This must have been a most exciting time for Niels. All his family members except one brother, Hans, had previously emigrated; Niels was delayed because of his missionary service, and possibly working to save the money for the journey to Zion. After Niels left, from 1856 to 1864 there was a conference (church unit) on Fyen with headquarters at Odense, the principle city on Fyen.

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid, 41.

<sup>17</sup>Haslam, 28.

## Crossing the Ocean

Niels and his new wife, Karen Jensen, sailed on the *John J. Boyd* in the Company of Canute Peterson in December of 1855. This was a sailing vessel of 1311 tons. Of the passengers, common folk were plentiful. “Artisans, carpenters and related craftsmen like carriage makers made up a considerable group, 11 percent of reported occupations in the selected companies; in the *John J. Boyd* company of 1855 they formed 17 percent.”<sup>18</sup> We know from the many accounts of Scandinavian Mormon emigrants making this voyage that it was no easy thing. But the European Saints had been counseled to come to the United States.<sup>19</sup> It is probable that Niels had the funds to make the entire journey when he left Denmark. “The great majority in the 1850s decades of Mormonism’s largest rural membership in Scandinavia were independent enough to pay their passage to Zion . . . many accounts speak of private means.”<sup>20</sup> Many of the Saints who needed help through the Perpetual Emigrating Fund were those who had been cut off by their parents upon joining the church. This was not the case with Niels and Karen.

There were many Scandinavians who died coming across the Atlantic. Niels’s mother was one of these. She and Hans were crossing on the *Forest Monarch* in the John Forsgren



**Typical Emigrant Ship--1853**

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<sup>18</sup>William Mulder. *Homeward to Zion—the Mormon Migration from Scandinavia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1957), 112.

<sup>19</sup>Kate B. Carter. *Treasures of Pioneer History*, vol. 4, (Salt Lake City: Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, 1955), 1.

<sup>20</sup>Mulder, *Homeward to Zion*, 111.

Company, the first large Scandinavian group to make the crossing. Maren had been in delicate health and could not stand the poor accommodations and food and she died just before the ship reached port in New Orleans without having ever set foot on the “Land of America” towards which she had set out with so much hope and faith. Niels’s brother, Jens, lost his son, Christen, in a later crossing. Christen died in Liverpool at the age of one year just a short time before his brother Joseph was born on shipboard; the death occurred during a siege of fever and illness that claimed the lives of 22 little children.<sup>21</sup> There were happy times, too. Babies were born and marriages took place. The Saints were traveling as a united group seeking a common goal. This provided for much good feeling among the party.

### **Crossing the Plains**

A few days after landing in New York on the 16<sup>th</sup> of February, 1856, the emigrants with Niels started for Chicago by rail. About of a third of the company, including Niels and his wife, then traveled south to St. Louis, arriving there on March 10<sup>th</sup>.<sup>22</sup> A short while later, most of them proceeded to Florence, Nebraska where they started across the plains. Likely because of his missionary service in Norway before emigrating, Niels was sent on a short mission to some Norwegian emigrants in Clay county Missouri before rejoining the Canute Peterson’s wagon company in Florence. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of June, Niels and Karen left with this wagon train for Salt Lake City, more than a month ahead of the ill-fated Willie and Martin handcart companies. They arrived in Salt Lake on September 20<sup>th</sup>.<sup>23</sup> This was the second of six wagon companies in 1856. The first five of the new handcart companies also crossed the plains this same year,

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<sup>21</sup>Jensen, *History of the Scandinavian Mission*, 88.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid, 107.

<sup>23</sup>*Deseret News 1989-1990 Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1988), 179-180.

including the Willie and Martin companies that had such disastrous consequences later in the summer. Traveling in a wagon with the first of these handcart pioneers, the Ellsworth company, was Charles Card, who would later become one of Niels's closest friends. Leaving from Iowa City one day later than Niels's company, and arriving in Salt Lake City six days later than the same, Charles would have followed closely behind, but they probably didn't cross paths on the trail. One has to wonder, though, if Niels and Charles met at the trails end and established the beginning of their long friendship.

Although we do not have an exact account of Niels's company as they crossed the plains, some accounts about family members who made earlier crossings have been preserved.. Also, much has been written on this particular year as 1856 was the year of the Willie and Martin Company crossings. Niels and Karen's trek west was slightly delayed when Niels was called on a short mission to work with some Norwegian settlers in Clay County, Missouri. It would be wonderful to know more about this event in Niels's life, but no further details have been uncovered. Norwegians located in Clay County and interested in hearing the gospel would be of great interest, as this was the part of Missouri the Saints had been forced to leave. After this short mission, Niels and Karen traveled on to Florence, Nebraska and joined the second wagon company of the year, again in a company led by Canute Peterson who had been their shipboard leader when crossing the Atlantic.

Crossing the plains had been a difficult experience for the family members who had crossed earlier. Jorgen Jacobsen, Niels's half brother, died of cholera along with several of his children. Peder Hansen, Niels's brother, also died in June, 1855, on the trail, as did one of his children. And brother Jens lost his wife, Maren, to the same insidious disease that was so

rampant along the waterways that year. It can well be imagined that Niels pondered these deaths as he passed through the places they had occurred, adding a nostalgic note to the journey.

One other occurrence of an unusual type happened to Jens and Jorgen Peter, Niels's brothers while they were crossing the plains in 1853. Jorgen became emotionally ill and decided after the first day on the trail that he did not want to go any further. He demanded that his clothes be obtained out of the wagon. Jens tried to convince him of the foolishness of this decision, but could not influence him. "He said he wanted to stay there on the ground until the wolves would eat his body."<sup>24</sup> Several others tried to appeal to Jorgen to continue with them to no avail. Finally, it was decided they would have to leave Jorgen and hope he would go to a close city and find work. Later, however, they found Jorgen lying in some grass close to the trail. It was decided that some Brethren would accompany Jens to the place where his brother was lying; the intention was to secure him with ropes and return him to camp for his safety. But Jorgen came of his own free will.<sup>25</sup> There must have been many occurrences like this that we would never imagine. We are blessed to have this account.

There were happy times on the trail, too. Niels's father had been advised to marry again and found his second wife, Dorthea Christensen, who had traveled across the ocean and started across the plains in the same company as Hans. They were married by a campfire in Council Bluffs, Iowa, on July 3, 1853.<sup>26</sup> When Niels and Karen arrived in Utah, September 20th, after a

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<sup>24</sup>Jens Hansen, *Life Story*, 16.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid*, 17.

<sup>26</sup>Kate B. Carter, comp. "A Pioneer Journal, Forsgren Company, Containing Story of The First Danish Company to Emigrate to Utah," *Historical Pamphlet* (March 1944) (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, State Central Company, 1944), 21.

short stay in Salt Lake City they turned toward Brigham City where Niels's father, Hans Jorgensen and his new step mother, Dortha, were living.

## Brigham City

A number of Scandinavians had accompanied Lorenzo Snow when he was called in 1853 to take 50 families to Box Elder. We believe Niels's father, Hans, was either with this group or arrived shortly thereafter. At first, the people stayed in a fort that had previously been built there, but gradually they moved out and began to build their homes on city lots. The first houses were made of adobe.<sup>27</sup> We know from records of the births of Niels's children by his first wife, Karen Jensen, that Niels and Karen joined Hans in Brigham City soon after they arrived in Utah. They had been married in Denmark in November of 1855, just one month before they sailed for America. Their first child was born in 1857 in Brigham City. It was probably comforting for Niels to be near his father in this new land, especially with the imminent arrival of his first child.

A significant event in Church history occurred in 1857 that affected all the Saints living in Brigham City. Responding to unauthenticated reports, the Buchanan Administration felt the necessity of sending an army of 2,500 soldiers into Utah to put down the treason and rebellion being perpetrated by Church leaders who were also Territorial Government leaders. The Latter-day Saint Church leaders did not know what the specific instructions of the army officers that were commanding the



<sup>27</sup>Box Elder Chapter, Sons of the Utah Pioneers. *Box Elder Lore of the Nineteenth Century* (Brigham City, Utah: Box Elder News and Journal, 1951.), 61.

“Expedition” had been.<sup>28</sup> But many of the Saints had lived through the horrors of Missouri and Illinois. They did not know but what these atrocities would be repeated in their new settlement. The people in the northern outlying settlements were with others counseled to leave their homes and to move south to join with the body of the Saints in the Utah valley. “There was a mass meeting in Brigham City on 25 March, 1858, to discuss the Move South, as soon as the roads were dry in the spring.”<sup>29</sup> A great exodus occurred from Brigham City including Niels and Hans and their families. From the *History of the Church*, we read “The road was thronged with people from the northern settlements moving southward, their wagons loaded with provisions and household effects, while loose cattle, horses, sheep, even pigs were driven in droves before them. They were leaving their homes at the call of their prophet . . . moving confidently, even cheerfully.<sup>30</sup> The Saints had been told that if necessary, “it would be better to burn our cities as an offering to the Lord.”<sup>31</sup> Men were left behind being instructed to apply the torch to every living thing if it came to that as a protest against the government.

The army did march through Salt Lake starting on the 26<sup>th</sup> of June, 1858. The march was peaceable and the soldiers were quartered away from the city. Only a few Utah guards had been in Salt Lake to witness the march. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, the Saints were instructed that all could return to their homes. Where were the families of Hans and Niels during the months of absence from Brigham City? It is probable that they were camping in the vicinity of Spanish Fork as

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<sup>28</sup>B. H. Roberts. *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Century I*, vol. 4 (Orem, Utah: Sonos Publishing Inc, 1991), 257.

<sup>29</sup>Frederick M. Huchel. *A History of Box Elder County* (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, 1999), 77.

<sup>30</sup>Roberts, 380.

<sup>31</sup>Jens Hansen, *Life Story*, 19.



Jens made the decision at the end of the siege not to go to Brigham City, but to remain in Spanish Fork. Hans and Niels, however, did return. Niels and Karen had two more children while living in Brigham City, Niels Young Hansen in 1859 and Sarah Caroline Hansen in 1860.

## **Logan**

The Cache Valley settlement where the City of Logan was established, did not have to depend on instructions from the Church leaders for settlers to choose to live there. It was a beautiful place. People wanted to move there. The first settlers came in 1857 and had a bountiful harvest that year. Saints from this valley also responded to the call from Brigham Young to leave their homes until the menace of Johnson's army had passed. A few returned to harvest crops in the fall of that year. There was one serious drawback for the Saints living in Cache Valley that is summed up in a letter sent to the Saints there by Brigham Young. This letter was sent when the Saints from Cache Valley were given authorization to return to their homes following the retreat of Johnson's army. "You are perfectly aware . . . that you at that place are perfectly cut off from any assistance from any of our settlements during the winter. You will therefore have to rely entirely upon your own resources and should go strong enough and perfectly prepared to sustain yourselves and should moreover be very careful in traveling in cold weather. You must be very cautious about the hostile Indians from the north."<sup>32</sup> The Cache Valley settlement was isolated. The people populating the area had to be self sufficient with only a few neighbors to turn to for help in time of trial. Niels thrived in this community.

Niels was the first in the family to relocate to Cache County. He came before 1862. But Hans and his family arrived April 18, 1865. From that time Hans and Niels worked together to

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<sup>32</sup>F. Ross Peterson. *A History of Cache County* (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, 1997), 34.

domesticate the land and provide for their families. Ultimately Niels settled in Providence, a town that had only been established in 1859, while Hans had a home in Logan and a homestead out in the country where his family spent the summer months farming and raising stock. At this time Niels was ordained a Seventy. His fourth child, Ezra Alvin Hansen was born in Logan, Cache County, in April of 1863. Five more children were born to Niels and Karen there in Cache County, the last being in 1874. It is likely that when Niels first arrived, he had no way to legally possess his land. Most of the early settlers squatted on the land, eventually coming into it legally after time. It was not until 1867 that procedures were put in place for settlers to have their land surveyed. Before that time there were no land offices, indeed there were no federal institutions of any kind.<sup>33</sup>

Niels and Hans were farmers and thus they needed water. Although Cache Valley is naturally watered, the water did not flow consistently. Helping to build canals and dams took much of the men's time, and improvements on Niels's property went slow the first few years. A half-sister of Niels, Hansine Jorgensen, tells of the sisters in the family waiting and watching the western road on Saturday afternoons for the men who sometimes came home for Sunday.<sup>34</sup> During these early days Niels and Hans were probably off working on one or another of these water facilities. From Hansine's records we know of the problem Cache Valley had with bears. There seemed to be many of them. They could be heard at night along with the wolves and foxes. One night Hansine's brother, Jacob, was sent to bring home the cows, after returning home much later than had been expected. Unfortunately, along with the cows, came a big bear.

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid, 87.

<sup>34</sup>Rebecca Jorgensen Frost. *Life History of Rebecca Jorgensen Frost* (not published - Copy in BYU Library Americana Collection), 3.

Niels's stepmother, Dorthea, knowing that bears were afraid of fire and smoke lit a fire which may have saved Jacob's life. The bear was right behind him when he made it home. The fire was kept going for the entire night.<sup>35</sup>



**Typical Sod-roofed Mormon Cabin**

The homes Niels and Hans built in Cache County were simple and functional. From Hansine's record we have a description of the Jorgensen home, a common one for the mid 1860s. The house she describes had three rooms. One room was a kitchen, living room and also functioned as the parent's bedroom. The second was used for a granary, and the middle room became the boys' bedroom. The pigs, sheep, cows, and horses shared accommodations on the north side of the yard where several low buildings were covered with straw. Many wonderful details were included in Hansine's record such as the rolls of cloth on a trunk in a corner, the flowers out the west door, and candles hanging from the roof. All these items provide a mental picture of a simple but industrious home life. These early settlers had been through a lot to finally find this peaceful paradise, and they were grateful for this gift from God. The land was blessed before even one night had passed after arrival. Hansine tells us, "Father then knelt down and blessed the land for the good of his family and their children after them."<sup>36</sup> This blessing must have stung Niels later when he was forced to flee the land to preserve his freedom.

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Frost, *History of Hans Jorgensen*, 3.

A major change came to Cache Valley when the railroad was completed in May of 1869. Niels and the other farmers needed a spur line extending into the valley so they could expand the market for their produce. It was determined that the citizens in the area would provide the labor. This would have been difficult for many like Niels who were still barely surviving, and the work slowed down during the planting and harvest times. Finally in December of 1872, the spur was completed. By the end of January, 1873, the tracks reached Logan.<sup>37</sup> This was a remarkable feat considering the track was laid almost completely by donated labor. The residents of Cache valley were dramatically affected by the increase in the Valley's agricultural productivity. Logan gradually became the leading community and county seat for Cache County.

During the 1870s, Niels was involved in working at the wood camp that had been established to supply firewood to burn the lime used to make mortar for the masonry work of the Logan Temple. "The wood cut at the camp was chopped into cord lengths and hauled to the banks of the Logan River where it was stacked and later floated down the river to the lime kiln. That fall [1877], attention was given to supplying poles to serve as scaffolding for the temple walls."<sup>38</sup> The wood camp was also responsible for keeping the winding canyon road in repair. This was difficult and required a large expenditure because of the spring floods. Niels became foreman in December 1877 over a crew that varied from two to twenty. The number of men giving service at any one time depended on the needs of those actively building the temple. After 1881, the wood camp was not used very much. The need for scaffolding was past. After this, the minimal amount of wood needed began to be hauled directly to the temple from the

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<sup>37</sup>Peterson, 72.

<sup>38</sup>Nolan P. Olsen. *Logan Temple—The First 100 Years* (Providence, Utah: Keith W. Watson & Sons, Inc., 1978), 79.

Mill. Today there is a “Wood Camp” marker which designates this location fifteen miles up Logan Canyon.



**Logan Temple**

The temple was completed May 17, 1884. Before 1877, when the first temple in Utah was finished at St. George, patron attendance at the Endowment House was encouraged only for receiving one’s own endowments, being married, witnessing marriages, and doing some baptisms for the dead. This was to change drastically with more local temples being built in outlying areas. There are abundant records left of Jorgensen-Hansen family members performing temple work for the dead of that family.

Niels became Bishop of the Providence Ward in 1886. One of his counselors was Rudolph Hochstrasser, the father of one of his future wives. The Church was much pressed to help so many of the immigrants that welfare issues were constantly overshadowing other duties of the leaders. Pioneers from Logan recalled that “during worship services, members of the congregation regularly discussed community needs and acted on them. One local Mormon leader regularized charity by passing a “community basket through his ward; members of his congregation either placed commodities in the basket or removed them, whatever the circumstance. A more common practice was for the bishop to receive in-kind tithes and ‘fast-offerings’ and then dispense these commodities to the poor.”<sup>39</sup>

Other things we do as members of the church today were clearly not part of the regular practice with the Church in the early days. Early in Utah’s history, LDS members did not attend

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<sup>39</sup>Ronald W. Walker and Doris R. Dant, ed. *Nearly Everything Imaginable—The Everyday Life of Utah’s Mormon Pioneers* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1999), 53.

regular ward meetings. There were general worship meetings, prayer and fast meetings, and stake conferences. Most Saints did not hold ward callings. The regulations had begun to change in the 1870s. “Ward meetings and activities increased as the four auxiliary organizations were introduced one by one . . . the men were expected only to be ready to accept calls to be acting teachers or to fill proselyting missions.”<sup>40</sup>

### **Niels and Polygamy**

While in Logan, Niels engaged in five polygamous marriages. This added a tremendous weight to his troubles. There was great hostility toward the Mormons by the gentiles in Logan during the polygamy years. Because of the raids on polygamists, there was also resentment on the part of the Mormons. Charles Ora Card, who ultimately led the Saints to settle Cardston in Alberta, left a detailed journal of his years in Logan and Cardston. The lives of Niels Hansen and Charles Ora Card were inextricably bound together. They both lived in Cache Valley and relocated in Cardston. They both had many wives and a great deal of sorrow and strife during the 1880s over the laws passed to eradicate polygamy in Utah. We are blessed to have Card’s journal as Niels was mentioned repeatedly during both his Cache Valley days and Alberta days.

Much research is yet needed in regard to the marriages Neil contracted in Logan. It is known he married Anna Catherine Jensen. It is believed that Anna was sister to Karen, Niels’s first wife. He also married Bodil Hansen and Anna Christine Arvesen, who served as cook for the Logan Temple Wood Camp during the time Niels was the foreman.<sup>41</sup> Niels married Jensina Arvesen, possibly a sister of Christine. In the vital records of Cache County which were lost for

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid, 260.

<sup>41</sup>Olsen, 81.

many years and have now been published, it was found that two of the children supposedly belonging to Karen Jensen were in actuality daughters of Niels and a Caroline Anderson. These two children were, James Andrew, born in 1872 and Mary Ann, born in 1874.<sup>42</sup>

Finally, on November 12, 1887, Niels married his sixth and last wife, Eva Leota Hochstrasser.<sup>43</sup> Eleven children were born to Niels and Eva. Directly following this marriage, Niels had the worst of his troubles over polygamy. There was a mix of polygamists and monogamists in Cache Valley. S. George Ellsworth has estimated that polygamists were roughly seven percent of the total families in 1880.<sup>44</sup> Until this time, polygamy had been looked upon as a normal accepted option for men who could afford to sustain more than one household. A subculture grew up to insure the survival of the men who were being sought for breaking the federal laws.

When the Congress passed the Edmunds Act outlawing polygamy in 1882 it was the beginning of a great change in the lifestyle of many families. With this law, polygamists were prohibited from holding public office and were restricted in various other ways. Husbands and wives strategically left Cache Valley, went into hiding, or left to serve in the mission field. Card and Niels remained in the area, but they were uneasy. “By 1886 nearly every settlement in Utah

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<sup>42</sup>Logan Herald-Journal. “Logan Vital Statistics,” *The Herald-Journal*, Logan, Utah (1936-1939) Weekly clippings from these newspapers publishing long lost vital records for the Logan area from 1860 to 1875 have been assembled into a bound volume at the Family History Library and have been microfilmed.

<sup>43</sup>Family Group Sheet prepared by their daughter, Mary Leota Hansen Steele.

<sup>44</sup>Godfrey and Card, xxxi.

had been raided by U.S. Deputy Marshals in search of polygamists, and most of the general authorities were in hiding.”<sup>45</sup>

The following excerpt from Card’s journal is representative of many he recorded showing the anger and frustration that raged in the hearts of those being sought by the law for polygamy. “Saturday, March 19, 1887: After a few hours rest I arose shortly before 8 a. m. and conversed with Brother Niels Hansen and got him to go & get my horse and mail. The City of Logan is much infested with what we term spotters, mostly apostates, & sons of apostates that dog the trails of the Brethren. Many of whom with brethren of my age have protected from the onslaughts of the red man. Now they repay us by joining the Judas class and betray us for Uncle Sams Shekels . . . tonight I went to Logan accompanied by Niels Hanson Jr. and met with Apostle Lorenzo Snow.”<sup>46</sup>

In March of 1887, Congress passed the Edmunds-Tucker act to amend and strengthen the earlier anti-polygamy legislation. It included such onerous measures as compelling wives to testify against their husbands, dissolving the Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company and the Nauvoo Legion, eliminating women’s suffrage, and disincorporating the Church. By 1887, nearly 200



**Imprisoned for unlawful cohabitation**

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<sup>45</sup>Providence History Committee. *Providence and Her People* (Keith W. Watkins and Sons: Providence, Utah, 1974), 63.

<sup>46</sup>Godfrey and Card, 39.



men were prisoners in Utah and several were incarcerated in Idaho for unlawful cohabitation.<sup>47</sup>

Many men from Providence were arrested and sent to prison. Niels was one of these. He was arrested in October of 1886 for unlawful cohabitation. He was placed under bonds and subjected to repeated trials, but the charges would not hold.<sup>48</sup>

Several other males in the family suffered great penalties for involvement in polygamy. Jens Jorgensen, Niels's older brother who had remained in Spanish Fork after fleeing before the arrival of Johnson's army, had contracted numerous marriages. All were happy and well taken care of. His journals were filled with temple trips for the purpose of having his wives endowed and sealed. Upon sharing a meal with the Jens Hansen family in 1877, a Danish editor:

.....found him sitting at the head of the table, his eldest wife at his left followed by seven others in order of marriage. At his right sat his eldest son, other sons descending by age like steps to the youngest. The daughters sat at the foot of the table. 'Enemies of polygamy' commented the editor, 'have said that this system weakens the race.', . . . according to him, Patriarch Hansen seemed to refute the notion. 'Congress ought to do something to encourage others to follow the patriarch's example', he thought: 'give a man forty acres of land for every woman he married and ten acres for every child.'<sup>49</sup>

Jens records the sad Utah homecoming from his third mission to Denmark. He was arrested without even having time to secure his hat and coat. His wives were ordered to appear in court and he was set free from all but his first wife. "I had to start working hard physically

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<sup>47</sup>Providence History Committee, 63.

<sup>48</sup>Andrew Jensen. *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia : A Compilation of Biographical Sketches of Prominent Men and Women in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* , vol. 2 (Salt Lake City, 1901-1936), 18.

<sup>49</sup>Mulder, *Homeward to Zion*, 138.

and build a little home with four rooms into which I later moved with my first wife to be obedient to the laws of the land. Then a part of my family could move into the large house.”<sup>50</sup>

In actuality, Scandinavian polygamists were in the minority among their countrymen. Jens was one of only four Scandinavian polygamists in Spanish Fork.<sup>51</sup> In regard to this reticence on the part of Scandinavians, President John Taylor told a Swedish journalist in 1883, that “all do not strive equally for heavenly glory.”<sup>52</sup> William Mulder in *Homeward to Zion* tells of Hans Zobell’s wife.

When Hans once broached the subject to her, he found at dinner time one day only two potted geraniums on the table, one young and full of swelling buds, the other a plant nearly bloomed out which had been about the house a long time. ‘Which of these will you keep?’ she wanted to know. ‘Study them, take your time, then tell me what you decide.’ Hans understood and no second wife ever crossed the threshold.<sup>53</sup>

Rebecca, Niels’s half sister–child of Hans Jorgensen and his second wife, Dorthea, was counseled not to marry into a polygamous line, an action she had fully intended to take. This was just before the manifesto.<sup>54</sup>

Eva Leota Hochstrasser, of Swiss ancestry and Niels sixth and last wife, became the mother of eleven children. Eva also came from polygamous stock; her father, Rudolph, married six wives. The first was a marriage to Maria Sutter. They were married en route to America by

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<sup>50</sup>Jens Hansen, *Diary of Jens Hansen—Covering Period from 6 April 1865 through February 1891* (not published, available at BYU Library Americana Collection under Jorgensen family records donated by Rebecca Jorgensen Frost), 120.

<sup>51</sup>Mulder, *Homeward to Zion*, 239.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid, 138.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Frost, *Life History of Rebecca Frost*, 5.

the Captain of the ship *Emerald Isle* which arrived in New York in 1859.<sup>55</sup> Maria was fifteen years older than Rudolph, but the marriage was successful. Rudolph had been twelve when the Mormon missionaries came to Switzerland; and he was twenty by the time he and his widowed mother could afford to emigrate. When they reached New York, Rudolph had to spend six months as an apprentice to a shoemaker to earn the money for them to continue west. They joined the Jesse Murphy company in Florence (now Omaha), Nebraska.<sup>56</sup> Leaving Florence on June 19, 1860, Rudolph and his family arrived in Salt Lake on August 30<sup>th</sup>. On November 1, 1861, he married his second wife, Mary Ann Lanz, who became the mother of Eva Leota. Eventually, after his third marriage to Ursula Maria Kerner, Rudolph moved to Providence where he bought a home and 30 acres of land. He became renowned as a shoemaker and was a superior craftsman. Boys' shoes were made from the hide of cows and leather soles were fastened with wooden pegs. These were nailed with hobnails to prolong use.<sup>57</sup>

Rudolph went on a mission to Switzerland. Because he owed a great deal of money, reputed to be \$1,200<sup>58</sup> (although this seems a lot), many felt he should stay home and pay the debt before going on the mission. When he asked the advice of church authorities, they told him to go on his mission. His three boys took care of the farm. While on his mission, his life was threatened by twenty-five intoxicated men. He gave his watch and other things to the mob and told them he was ready to give his life for Christ. They allowed him to leave finally. He was

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<sup>55</sup>Frank Esshom. *Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah* (Salt Lake City, 1913), 937.

<sup>56</sup>Eva Thompson, *Rudolph Hockstrasser* (at the Matkin Family Internet website at <http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Village/1209/page14.htm>), 1.

<sup>57</sup>Providence History Committee, 256.

<sup>58</sup>Thompson, 2.

also arrested at one time, fined 100 francs, and sentenced to 25 days in jail. His timely mission release came on the first day of his prison term. He was allowed to return home honorably.<sup>59</sup>

One interesting and unusual hobby of Rudolph's was that of mining. He and his friend John Heyrend dug in the hills and along the face of the mountains for over half a century.<sup>60</sup> Rudolph did not fare so well in his older years. He was forced to sell his farm a few acres at a time in the attempt to support his large family. Not being very successful at farming, one of his wives left him. At one time he had lost all he had. But he was a good and obedient man. Matilda A Jahnke, a widow from Wisconsin, became wife number six; and they lived the rest of their lives together in a little home in River Heights. He was remembered well by the children of his polygamous marriages. We have the patriarchal blessing for his youngest son, Alma, as he prepared to serve a mission in Sweden. His children remained faithful in the church. Mary Hochstrasser Theurer wrote of her life as both Rudolph's daughter and later a wife in polygamy. "My mother attended to the vegetable garden, Aunt Mary Ann, my father's second wife, done the sewing and Aunt Ursula was a good cook. They all lived in the same house and ate at the same table, they were an industrious and peaceable family indeed. I can remember nothing of a disagreeable nature ever occurring. If there were little differences at times, they were soon straightened out."<sup>61</sup>

Rudolph was arrested for his involvement in polygamy after being warned several times. A conviction could not be obtained, however, and he was released. He did lose some of his wives for the remainder of his time on this earth.

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid, 3.

<sup>60</sup>Providence History Committee, 207.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid, 33.



## Canada



**Charles Ora Card**

Charles Ora Card was instrumental in establishing the settlement in Cardston, Alberta. He was encouraged to do this by President John Taylor who was a Canadian by birth. Card had come to discuss relocating in Mexico (to avoid prosecution for polygamy) with the President. President Taylor told Card that a settlement in Western Canada would be successful. After making one trip to Canada and scouting out the most likely place for the settlement, Card returned to Logan and invited others to accompany him in the move. From his journal we read,

Monday, March 14 a.m. 1887: I remained here writing and arranging to go away & open the way for my Brethren the Exiles to go North. I sent for Bp. Hyde and sent him through all the Northern settlements of Cache Stake to notify the brethren to be ready by the 25<sup>th</sup> of this month with their pioneer wagons & the others to move as soon as they were ready.<sup>62</sup>

By the actual day of departure, many of the Saints had backed down from going, with only seven other families included in the first group that emigrated in 1887. Niels, with his new wife Eva Leota Hochstrasser, arrived in early 1889. A trickle of fugitive Mormons continued to emigrate, until the 1890 manifesto suspended the practice of polygamy and removed the main reason for relocating north. For many years henceforth, Niels and Charles Card served together in the church and were personal friends. They were both old hands at being original settlers in an alien environment. But it was not easy. The governmental and social institutions that aid in the smooth running of life were significantly delayed in Western Canada. Once again, this was a

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<sup>62</sup>Godfrey and Card, 37.

pioneer settlement, predominantly male. It was struggling for survival. Loneliness, isolation, few marriage partners, and great disparities in wealth were some of the most prevalent hardships.<sup>63</sup> On a positive note, the perception of the west as a refuge and a modern Israel composed of righteous Christian people came north with the Mormon settlers.

The life in Canada was difficult for Niels and Eva while raising the eleven children born there. Lorna Matkin James, granddaughter of Eva, wrote of some things her mother said about being a child in this family. She said the surroundings were humble. Niels and Eva would go to town and buy various sizes and kinds of shoes. When they arrived home, it was first come, first serve. Christmas was very frugal, with each child lucky to get an orange in their stocking. The fair was a special time for the children; they would rub buttermilk in their faces to bleach out their tans. The visiting Church people always ate at Grandma Hansen's. Children were served the leftovers. Lorna relates a touching thought passed down from her mother. "I remember as a little girl wondering why mother liked the neck or the back of the chicken, not realizing she was leaving the choice pieces for her family."<sup>64</sup>

Grandpa Hansen, Niels, got tired of rounding up the calves the children let out. He told the children if it happened again, they would *all* get a whipping. And they all did, except Evelyn, the one who let the calves out! "The others all had to get down with bare bottoms and receive the punishment."<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid, xxiv.

<sup>64</sup>Lorna Matkin James. "I Remember Mama - Loreen Hansen Matkin", *The Phylactery*, vol. 14, no. 4 (May 1988), privately published newsletter of the Thomas Matkin Family Organization, copy in possession of the author. Also available on the Internet at <http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Village/1209/page6.htm> (18 June 1999), 1.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid, 6.

Niels and Charles Card became business partners; they were the first directors of the Cardston Company with John A. Woolf, S. F. Allan and Eph Harker. This became a thriving business. There was tension because of the cattlemen's monopolistic leasing rights in contrast to the lesser rights of the new settlers. The Mormon settlement was north of the international border on Lee Creek, about fifteen miles. It was thirty eight to forty four miles to the nearest settlement. It did not take too long, however, for the Canadians to recognize the honesty and integrity with which the Mormons conducted their business affairs.

Eva was the only wife Niels took with him into Canada. We do not know how the decision was made to take this particular wife; but it would have been a painful choice for Niels, especially leaving behind Karen Jensen by whom he had 9 children. The practice of polygamy was not allowed in Canada; although Apostles John W. Taylor and Francis M. Lyman traveled to Ottawa in order to present an appeal to the Justice Minister, Sir John Thompson and Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald. Their request for the allowance of polygamous marriages was firmly refused.<sup>66</sup> Of course, just as in other localities, a few plural marriages were secretly performed. This was unusual, however, and after 1890 polygamy did not attract settlers to Canada.

Neither Charles Card nor Niels had much affection for the English people who ran the Canadian government in Alberta. Card came from the American East Coast and Niels from Denmark. It helped that Aetna, Niels's small village, was quite close to the American border. We were up there a couple of summers ago, and there is nothing left in Aetna but one little general store and a couple of homes. Cardston was a fun place for us to visit, however. They

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<sup>66</sup>Ken Driggs. "The Prosecutions Begin: Defining Cohabitation in 1885," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol. 21, no. 1 (Spring 1988), 120.



had an excellent theater with live productions. The performance was quite good. Even in the early days, this type of entertainment was popular. It was fun for the performers as well as the audiences. Education was important to Niels and Eva. Niels had originally built a room full of desks for a school for the children. Later he built a two-room school.<sup>67</sup> Building the school may or may not have had something to do with Karl G. Maeser coming to live with Niels and his family for a time. Eventually Maeser became President of BYU. At this time he was on a mission from the First Presidency to instill a half hour of religious instruction into the curriculum promoted by the school boards.<sup>68</sup>

Card refers to entertainment of those days in his journal. “Friday, May 24, 1895. Today is the Queen Victoria’s Birthday. A holiday here. I worked in the Store until 3 p.m. Went then & witnessed a game of Base Ball between the Cardston & Mountain View ward boys & the former won the game then worked in the store till 9 p.m. & attended our local theater by our amateurs’ “*British Born*” and the play was well rendered.”<sup>69</sup> Another of Card’s entries tells of a children’s dance from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. The adult one was from 7 p.m. to 12 Midnight. Eighty three members attended. Card covered the expenses for both dances. Of course, many of the men like to fish and hunt, Canada being a wonderful place to indulge in these sports. In 1889 Joseph F. Smith visited. He caught two or three fish on Neil’s property while the remainder of the party caught none.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>Jane Eliza Woolf Bates and Zina Woolf Hickman. *The Founding of Cardston and Vicinity*. (Unpublished manuscript located in the Cardston Public Library, Cardston, Alberta, c1960), xx.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>Godfrey and Card, 295.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid, 104.

Niels was counselor to Bishop Pillings from the beginning of the Aetna Ward, December 17, 1893. In the early days, Aetna Ward was part of the Cache Stake. In late July of 1894, Apostle John W. Taylor sent word that he would be out in six weeks to dedicate Aetna's new chapel. This was the first the Saints there had heard of a chapel. Apostle Taylor felt the Ward was too slow in building a chapel. Somehow, they were able to get the building ready, and the building was dedicated on September 6, 1894.<sup>71</sup>

Niels served a mission to Manitoba during 1897. At least Card refers to it as a mission<sup>72</sup> in his journal in many entries such as the following:

. . . Niels Hansen who starts on his mission to Manitoba . . . ; . . . Arose at 5:30 a.m. & prepared to start to Lethbridge with the missionaries for Manitoba, Elders N. Hansen . . . ; . . . Elder Niels Hansen came in & made a very favorable report of his mission . . . very favorable indeed so much so I feel impressed He should return, conversed with him until 9:30 and retired.<sup>73</sup>

Finally, Niels was made Bishop of the Aetna Ward on January 22, 1899. He remained in this position until he died in 1901.

Many spiritual experiences happened among the saints living in Aetna and were recorded by Card. One example will be presented here. "Thursday, August 6, 1896: A daughter of John Gregson's about 15 yrs. of age



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<sup>71</sup>Melvin S. Tagg, ed. *A History of the Mormon Church in Canada*, (The Lethbridge Herald Co.: Lethbridge, Alberta, 1968), 82-83.

<sup>72</sup>Tom Matkin, a present member of the Cardston Stake High Council and great grandson of Niels, stated in an oral interview 19 Dec 1998 that he believed the Manitoba assignment was almost like a high council assignment to Niels, who was a member of the first Cardston Stake High Council at the time.

<sup>73</sup>Godfrey and Card.

spoke in tongues which was interpreted by my wife Zina which was an exhortation to the Saints to rise & bear their testimony. ‘Though I am a child God can inspire me.’<sup>74</sup>

In her essay about her mother, Lorna Matkin wrote “When mother was about ten, her father died of a heart attack [this would be Niels]. He was a lot older than grandma. He left her with ten young children and another one on the way. Grandpa had half interest in a grocery store [this must be the business with Card], but the partnership was never in writing, so grandma was not even able to get their interest out in groceries. Not being able to feed and take care of all those children some were put out to earn their own board and room.”<sup>75</sup>

Times were changing everywhere. There were 143, 963 people in the (Utah) territory by 1880 and 73% were Mormon. Within ten years that percentage had fallen to 68%. The trend continued.<sup>76</sup> But the pattern of life for those Saints in Utah and those in Canada remained firm well into the twentieth century. This pattern included close family ties, the respite of the Sabbath, the rituals of worship, the quest for education, and the quiet confidence that comes with obedience to the principles of the gospel. On one visit from Jens to Cache Valley, the family talked him into considering a move from Spanish Fork. He asked his bishop, A. K. Thurber, about this. “He advised me to stay. He felt I could do more service for the church here than there. I felt it was the right thing to obey.”<sup>77</sup> And so it went during these critical times for Utah, Cardston, and the nations themselves. Like Jens, the great majority of the Saints of the nineteenth century were righteous, dedicated people, willing to serve where most needed.

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid, 354.

<sup>75</sup>Lorna Matkin, 2.

<sup>76</sup>Godfrey and Card, xxix.

<sup>77</sup>Jens Hansen, *Life Story*, 27.

At one time, during a gathering of the family in Box Elder County, Han Jorgensen asked the family to meet so that an important decision could be made. The head of the family had to be established; and most importantly, the family had to agree on which line of the General Authorities they would have themselves sealed into. It was common in those days to do this. The unanimous decision was to become a part of the family of Apostle Erastus Snow.<sup>78</sup> Little did these people realize the greatness of their family in its own right. They were just humble folk who kept the commandments and were obedient to the very end of their lives. They lived through the many crucial events of LDS history occurring in their lifetimes, the trek west, the first missionaries, temple building, polygamy, and spreading out to colonize a new country. Truly “one of a city and two of a family” came together to form an eternal bond of steel fashioned through great sacrifice and devotion in the most difficult of times.

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<sup>78</sup>Jens Hansen, *Diary*, 57.

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